

Message Text

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12
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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P R 070601Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1968
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 4622

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, BG, IN, US
SUBJ: FAREWELL CALL ON GENERAL ZIA

1. SUMMARY. DURING MY FAREWELL CALL ON GENERAL ZIA LAST NIGHT, HE EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION TO US FOR STANDING BY THEIR SIDE DURING CRISES OF PAST TWO YEARS AND FOR TAKING LEAD IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO BANGLADESH, ASSURING US THAT BANGLADESH WOULD CONTINUE TO BE A GOOD FRIEND OF US IN THE FUTURE. HE DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS ONLY MILDLY ENCOURAGED BY NEW INDIAN ACTION MAKING RESUMPTION OF FARAKKA TALKS POSSIBLE BUT STRESSED BDG'S DESIRE TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE OPEN. AGREEING THAT POPULATION CONTROL WAS BANGLADESH'S PARAMOUNT PROBLEM, HE SAID THEY WERE PLANNING NEW LEGISLATIVE STEPS TO HELP MEET IT. ON BILATERAL ISSUES, HE GAVE ME MOST ENCOURAGING ASSURANCES ON BELBAGCO CLAIM THAT WE HAVE HAD. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL ZIA RECEIVED ME FOR MY FAREWELL CALL IN HIS QUARTERS AT ARMY CANTONMENT LAST NIGHT AND WE COVERED THE FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS IN A 45 MINUTE CONVERSATION.

3. ECONOMIC SITUATION. ZIA EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION WITH CHANGE FOR THE BETTER THAT HAD OCCURRED
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IN BANGLADESH'S ECONOMIC SITUATION OVER LAST TWO YEARS,

AND PARTICULARLY HE FELT DURING LAST FEW MONTHS, NOTING SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS THEY HAD MADE TO COMBAT SMUGGLING, REDUCE CORRUPTION, PROVIDE BETTER CLIMATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY IMPROVING THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION, AND STIMULATE PRIVATE INITIATIVE. ONE OF THEIR MAIN EFFORTS NOW WAS TO IMPROVE THEIR CAPACITY FOR ABSORBING AID. HE SAID HIS EXPERTS HAD ASSURED HIM THAT THE DANGER OF A MAJOR FLOOD THIS YEAR WAS PAST AND THE OUTLOOK WAS GOOD FOR ANOTHER EXCELLENT HARVEST.

4. RELATIONS WITH INDIA. HIS COMMENTS ON ECOCCMIC SITUATION LED HIM TO OBSERVE THAT THE OUTLOOK WAS GOOD PROVIDED THAT INDIA DID NOT CAUSE THEM TOO MUCH TROUBLE IN THE DRY SEASON AHEAD. I SAID I HAD BEEN PLEASED TO LEARN THAT THERE HAD BEEN A NEW DEVELOPMENT ON THE FARAKKA PROBLEM WITH ADMIRAL KHAN RESUMING TALKS IN NEW DELHI. NOTING THAT KHAN HAD RECENTLY INDICATED TO ME THAT THERE WAS NO POINT IN FURTHER TALKS UNTIL INDIA RESPONDED TO BDG'S PROPOSALS, I ASKED HIM WHAT WAS NEW IN THE INDIAN POSITION. ZIA SAID THAT THE INDIAN POSITION NOW WAS THAT THE TALKS IN DELHI SHOULD BE HELD "WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS", AND THIS HAD INDUCED THEM TO GO AHEAD. HE SAID HE FELT THAT INDIA HAD BEEN SOBERED BY ITS RECENT EXPERIENCE AT THE COLOMBO CONFERENCE, WHERE BANGLADESH HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT FARAKKA WAS A NATIONAL PROBLEM WITH INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS. HE ALSO FELT THAT BANGLADESH AHD HAD SOME SUCCESS IN EXPLAINING ITS POSITION TO OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH IN TURN HAD SPOKEN TO INDIA. HE SAID HE WAS ALSO INTRIGUED BY THE POSSIBILITY THAT RECENT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN CHAVAN AND SOVIETS MIGHT HAVE AFFECTED INDIAN ATTITUDE. HE SAID HE WAS LITTLE ENCOURAGED BY THE "SUDDEN" NEW INDIAN MOVE, BUT NOT OVERLY ENCOURAGED IN VIEW OF INDIA'S PAST BEHAVIOR. NEVERTHELESS, HE SIAD, THEY FELT IT IMPORTANT TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE OPEN SO THAT A COMPROMISE COULD BE REACHED. WHEN I OBSERVED THAT BANGLADESH'S FEARS ABOUT ACTIONS THREATENING BANGLADESH'S SECURITY OVER PAST WEEKS AND MONTHS HAD FORTUNATELY NOT BEEN REALIZED, ZIA COMMENTED THAT BANGLADESH HAD MADE ADEQUATE PREPARATIONS AND SITUATION HAD BEEN CONTAINED. HE SAID MANY OF THE MISCREANTS WERE NOW TURNING THEMSELVES IN, BUT INDIA CONTINUED TO TRAIN

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NEW ONES AND THEY WERE TAKING NEW INDIAN WEAPONS FROM RECENT "RETURNEES." HE SAID INDIA NOW HAD 25 MISCREANTS CAMPS IN OPERATION.

5. POPULATION CONTROL. RESPONDING TO MY OBSERVATION THAT POPULATION CONTROL WAS OBVIOUSLY BANGLADESH'S PARAMOUNT PROBLEM WHICH WOULD REQUIRE SUPERHUMAN EFFORTS TO MEET OVER COMING YEARS, ZIA AGREED AND SAID HE FELT THEY HAD NOW GOT

INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE TO BEGIN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM EFFECTIVELY. HE SAID THEY WERE PLANNING NEW LEGISLATIVE STEPS AROUND THE END OF THE YEJI, AND HAD BEEN PREPARING THE PEOPLE FOR SUCH MOVES. HE SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY POPULAR REACTION TO GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DACCA 4622

6. DOMESTIC POLITICS. I TOLD ZIA I WAS A LITTLE BEWILDERED BY ALL THE PARTIES THAT WERE HOPING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMING ELECTIONS AND HE SAID HE HAD ALSO BEEN SURPRISED BY THE LARGE NUMBER COMING FORWARD. THIS WAS NOT WHAT HE HAD WANTED OR EXPECTED, NOTING THAT HE HAD SPOKEN IN FAVOR OF SMALL NUMBER OF PARTIES SO THAT EVENTUAL GOVERNMENT COULD HAVE BROAD LEADERSHIP BASE. HE SAID HE HAD NOT YET ANALYZED ALL THE PARTIES IN DETAIL BUT HAD BEEN TOLD THAT SOME WERE "TRASH" AND HE DID NOT EXPECT THAT SEVERAL OF THEM WOULD MEET THE CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION. AS IN THE PAST, ZIA SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST IN PURSUEING THIS SUBJECT.

7. NATIONALIZATION CLAIMS. I RAISED THE STATUS OF COMPENSATION CLAIMS FOR US COMPANIES, PARTICULARLY BELBAGCO, AND HE GAVE ME ENCOURAGING RESPONSE WHICH WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTEL.

8. RELATIONS WITH US. AFTER I HAD EXPRESSED MY

APPRECIATION FOR KINDNESSES SHOWN ME HERE DURING PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS, AND PARTICULARLY BY HIM. ZIA SPEND A FEW MINUTES ON STATE OF OUR RELATIONS. HE WAS VERY GRATEFUL, HE SAID, FOR FACT THAT WE "HAD STOOD AT THEIR SIDE DURING THEIR WORST MOMENTS" AND ALSO FOR THE FACT THAT
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OUR LEADERSHIP AT THE PARIS CONSORTIUM SEETING HAD MADE POSSIBLE THE SUBSTANTIAL AID BANGLADESH HAD BEEN RECEIVING. HE WAS PLEASED BY THE WAY OUR RELATIONS HAD COME ALONG AND, ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN LAPSES ON THEIR SIDE IN THE PAST, HE WAS GLADE THAT WE HAD NOT ALLOWED THEM TO MATTER. OUR FRIENDSHIP WAS AN OLD FRIENDSHIP, STARTED IN PAKISTANI TIMES. THEY KNEW HOW WE DID BUSINESS AND UNDERSTOOD US; OUR POLICIES SUITED THEM. WE HAD HELPED THEM ECONOMICALLY AND HE HOPED WE WOULD ALSO HELP THEM IN THE DEFENSE FIELD, ALTHOUGH THEY DID NOT NEED MUCH. HE SAID WE COULD RELY ON IT THAT BANGLADESH WOULD CONTINUE TO BE A GOOD FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE FUTURE.

9. COMMENT. I TAKE GENERAL ZIA'S PROFESSIONS OF A SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP FOR US AT FACE VALUE. HE HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY FRIENDLY AND OPEN TO US FROM THE BEGINNING, INCLUDING THE PERIOD WHEN HE WAS NOT IN HIS PRESENT POSTION OF LEADERSHIP OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT, AND HE HAS TAKEN UNUSUAL STEPS IN RECENT MONTHS TO EMPHASIZE HIS SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE UNITED STATES. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT HE HAS GROWN CONSIDERABLY IN HIS JOB, ALTHOUGH THE LIMITATIONS OF HIS NARROW PAST EXPERIENCE ARE STILL EVIDENT AND ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN SO FOR SOME TIME. HIS RECORD OVER THE PAST NINE MONTHS HAS BEEN GENERALLY GOOD -- BANGLADESH IS IN THE BEST SHAPE IT'S BEEN IN SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE ALTHOUGH LUCK HAS PLAYED A MAJOR PART -- AND IT IS A LITTLE HARD TO THINK OF HIM GOING BACK TO THE SIDELINES AFTER ELECTIONS IN FEBRUARY, AN EVENTUALITY WHICH NOW SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAN IT DID BUT WHICH IS STILL BY NO MEANS A CERTAINTY.
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